



PARSHAS MIKEITZ – DAVID FREEDMAN

The editors would like to apologise for missing this sedra sheet off last week's printed newsletter due to an error. For this reason, it has been included in this week's newsletter instead.

לשם שמים – For The Sake Of Heaven

In this week's Sedra, Potiphar's wife tries to seduce Joseph, as she sees in the stars that her family are destined to have children from Joseph. With such motivation, why is she condemned to shame and disgrace for her actions, when Tamar with similar motivations in last week's Sedra is praised?

Potiphar's wife, Zuleika, was mistaken to think it was children through her, as it was through her daughter, Osnas, their adopted daughter, that the children of Joseph would be born. Osnas was the child born to Jacob's daughter Dinah, through the raping by Shechem. Jacob's sons forced her to leave their father's household, but Jacob gave her an engraved metal necklace. Osnas is left in a field under a bush (S'neh) and found by Potiphar, who being childless, brings her up as their daughter.

When Joseph is appointed viceroy, he is paraded in Pharaoh's chariot, (41.43). All the Egyptian women wanted to see Joseph's beauty, and threw their jewellery at him. Osnas threw her necklace and Joseph read the inscription, "Whoever marries this girl should know that his children will be descendents of Jacob".

Joseph reads the inscription and asks Pharaoh to arrange for her as a wife.

ויתן לו את אסנת בת פוטי פרע כהן און לאשה

And he (Pharaoh) gave him (Joseph) Osnas, the daughter of Poti Phera, the priest of On, as a wife. (Bereishis 41,45)

Another version states that Osnas could find no-one to read the strange inscription, but when Joseph was appointed and given the name, צפנת פענח (Rashi - he who explains the hidden), she asks for Joseph to interpret and Joseph asks Pharaoh for her as a wife.

Osnas was destined by Hashem to be Joseph's wife, as history unfolds. Jacob was punished for hiding Dinah in a chest from Esav, as Dinah could have changed Esav's ways.

Dinah was raped by Shechem, the brothers wanted no hint of immorality in the household, she is thrown out and the Angel Gabriel (some say Michael) takes her to Egypt, where Potiphar is out walking and hears the cries of a baby.

So why is Tamar praised for her actions, as she could also see future generations for a union, whereas Potiphar's wife action is considered disgraceful?

When Tamar thought she had failed in her attempt to become the mother of the offspring, she considered she had not met with Divine approval was prepared to be burnt, rather than shame Judah in public. When Zuleika failed in her attempt to seduce Joseph, she sent out false malicious rumours. Zuleika's motivation was personal pride whereas Tamar was לשם שמים

Based on an essay of Rabbi I Bernstein TZ"l

In memory of my Mother, Braina bat Tzvi, whose Yahrtzeit is 30 Kislev